Conflict Management System and Democracy in Multinational Societies:

Case Studies in India and Nigeria

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Abstract

Conflicts expose a set of problems deeply entrenched in a society. Revelation of underlying problems helps the political elites to clarify issue priorities and form public policies accordingly. Conflicts also mobilize people in a grassroots level as different groups defend their own interests. Thus, conflicts serve to reflect plural interests in a decision-making process, thereby promoting representative and deliberative aspects of democracy. However, conflicts do not always lead to positive outcomes. In order for conflicts to serve the positive functions, a society has to have a sensitive conflict management system. The paper argues that the sensitivity is determined by a society's conflict management mechanism—political institutions, elite behavior, and civil society—and political culture. This paper compares and contrasts India and Nigeria, the two multinational societies where conflicts have spawned differing consequences. The paper concludes that conflicts can promote democracy in multinational societies, provided that they have a sensitive conflict management system.

Key Words democracy, power sharing, power dividing, political institutions, civil society, conflicts

Ⅰ. Introduction

Before unfolding the discussion on conflict management system, it is worth defining what sort of conflict this paper is mainly concerned with. Conflict discussed in this paper is confined to ethnic conflict, but this still is a broad terminology encompassing components that may count as conflicts of their own. A research report notes that ""ethnicity" may refer to race (meaning physiognomy and skin color), language, religion, or some combination thereof" (Fish and Brooks 2004, 156). Thus, ethnic conflict could also be construed as linguistic, religious, and even economic conflict. For this reason, the paper uses a generic term, "conflict," to refer to all sets of conflicts emerging from ethnic diversity.

Most approaches to the subject of conflict and democracy tend to focus on engineering political institutions to prevent and ameliorate conflicts. The prevalent idea that conflict is pernicious

to democracy led to prolific studies of the so-called conflict management mechanism (hereafter *mechanism*). *Mechanism* in this context refers to institutional and normative framework intended for reducing conflicts, and is composed of factors such as political institutions, elite behavior, rule of law, and civil society. As a result, the relationship between conflict and the *mechanism* depicted in political science literature has primarily been unilateral—the *mechanism* prevents conflicts. Spawned from this conceptual framework, political scientists have produced diverse theories of conflict resolution in divided societies. Mainly, there are power-sharing and power-dividing models. The two main schools in power-sharing model are consociational and integrative approaches. Arend Lijphart's consociational approach advocates elite-level cooperation in segmented societies, and is characterized by grand coalition, cultural autonomy, proportional representation, and minority veto (Lijphart 1996). Criticizing Lijphart's model, Donald L. Horowitz proposes integrative approach, focusing on elites' incentives for power sharing, mainly through the design of electoral system. Power-dividing strategy challenges both Lijphart's and Horowitz's power-sharing model. Donald Rothchild and Philip G. Roeder (2005) criticize that power sharing aggravates ethnic conflicts. Their power-dividing strategy emphasizes the role of civil society, separation of powers, and checks and balances. Each prescribes slightly different institutional arrangements, but all try to explicate the *mechanism* for ameliorating conflicts.

This paper argues that conflicts reduce the severity and frequency of future conflicts by generating and reinforcing the *mechanism*. In other words, the relationship between conflicts and the *mechanism* is bilateral—the *mechanism* prevents conflicts, *and* conflicts create and strengthen the *mechanism*. When conflicts lead to institutional reforms and the renewed *mechanism* prevents future conflicts, a society attains a mature democracy in which plural interests are addressed and managed. To explain the factors that encourage or discourage the virtuous feedback cycle derived from the bilateral model, this paper draws empirical evidence from India and Nigeria. This comparative case study demonstrates that conflicts can be conducive to democracy when the *mechanism* functions well.

The two multinational societies in the developing world, India and Nigeria share significant similarities. Both are populous countries with a great ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. Both suffer from corruption and a low income level. Both countries were colonized by the Great Britain, India for ninety years[1] and Nigeria for sixty years[2]. Yet in this similar setting, India has preserved democracy notwithstanding the frequent internal conflicts whereas Nigeria's democracy has taken a turbulent road. This paper finds the answer to this divergence in the sensitivity of the conflict management system. I define that a conflict management system is "sensitive" if conflicts lead to reforms of institutions or normative practice—the process of conflicts' "translation into the

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[1] GatewayforIndia. http://www.gatewayforindia.com/history/british_history3 htm.The total period of British rule is 200 years, starting from the East India Company period (http://www.iloveindia.com/history/modern-history/british-india html).

[2] History World . http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp?historyid=ad41.

mechanism". The factors that translate conflicts into the *mechanism* present in the Indian system are non-existent or significantly lacking in Nigeria.

This paper starts by explaining the positive functions of conflicts in a theoretical sense and presents diagrams of unilateral and bilateral conflict management system. The paper then proposes that the existing *mechanism* and political culture of a society determine the sensitivity of the conflict management system. Political culture can either promote or impede the performance of the *mechanism* in real politics. This is because political culture determines elite behavior and the public's political attitude. Strictly speaking, political culture constitutes a normative part of the *mechanism*. Although political culture and the *mechanism* are not separate concepts, the paper discusses the two in different sections because political culture is an indirect factor that affects the performance of the other elements in the *mechanism*. The paper first contrasts India's and Nigeria's mechanisms from both power-sharing and power-dividing perspectives, and then analyzes each country's political culture as a critical factor determining the sensitivity of the system.

This paper concludes that the leaders of multinational societies should make efforts to build a sensitive conflict management system, rather than trying to eliminate conflicts. The paper aims to show that conflicts can promote democracy in multinational societies, provided that the feedback cycle of conflicts and the *mechanism* remains effective.

Ⅱ. Conflict management system: from unilateral model to bilateral model

Figure 1 shows the unilateral relationship between the *mechanism* and conflict. Many policymakers have focused on eliminating conflicts through the *mechanism*, viewing conflicts as a pernicious force to democracy. They argue that ethnic conflicts, by favoring majority groups and suppressing minorities, lead to civil wars or even to state failures. This claim is supported by the study that a high level of ethnic diversity increases the chance of civil war (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), and that severe ethnic polarization leads to frequent conflicts, "which has negative effects on investment and increases rent-seeking activities" (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2002, 811). In addition to undermining democratic institutions and practices, conflicts can indirectly erode the public's perception of democracy. In her research on conflict perception, Krystyna Janicka (2000) assumes that "public perceptions of strong conflicts may adversely affect the acceptance of democratic social relations" (Zagórski 2006, 4). The prescription following this line of thought focuses on eradicating and preventing conflicts through the *mechanism*.
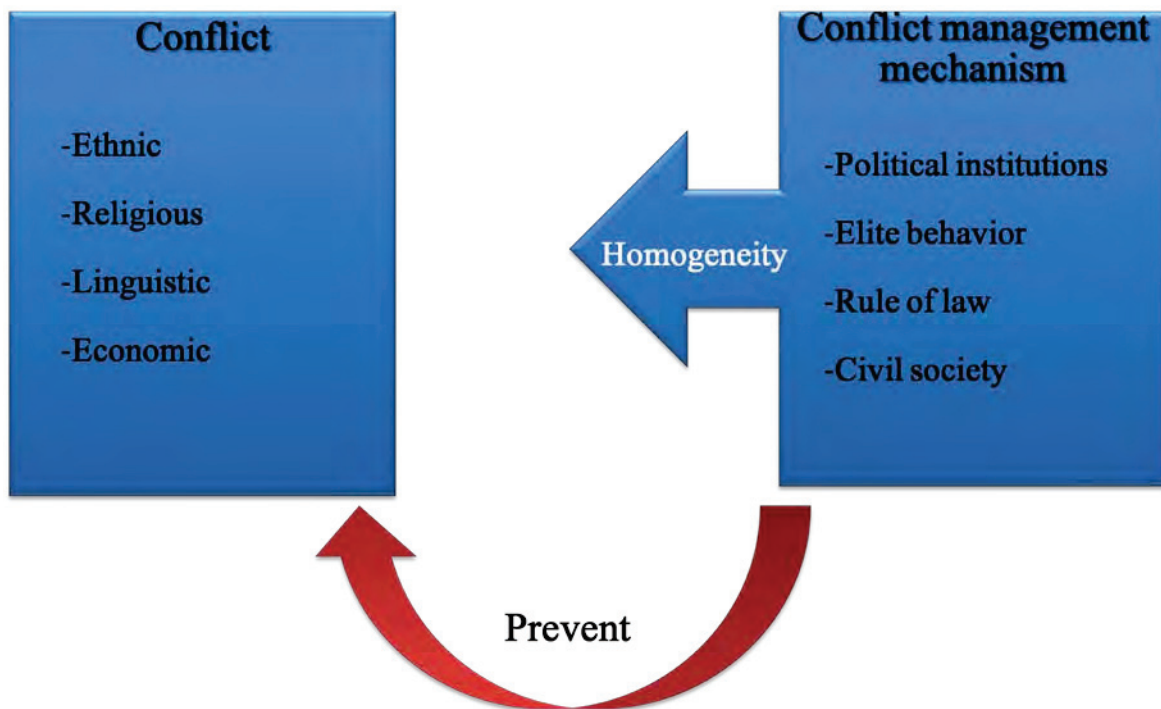
Figure 1. Prevalent model (unilateral conflict management system)

The bilateral model that this paper advocates is based on the belief that some conflicts are not only inevitable, but also necessary for advancing democracy. A group of scholars argue that the "institutionalization and legitimization of social conflicts constitute the very essence of democratic political systems" (Zagórski 2006, 4). As *figure* 2 shows, conflict produces the *mechanism*. Heterogeneity and homogeneity find an optimum level of coexistence through the feedback cycle. Under the bilateral framework, a good political system is one in which the feedback between conflicts and the *mechanism* is frequent. The more sensitive the *mechanism* is to conflicts, the more reforms are made to manage conflicts, and hence the more resilient democracy.
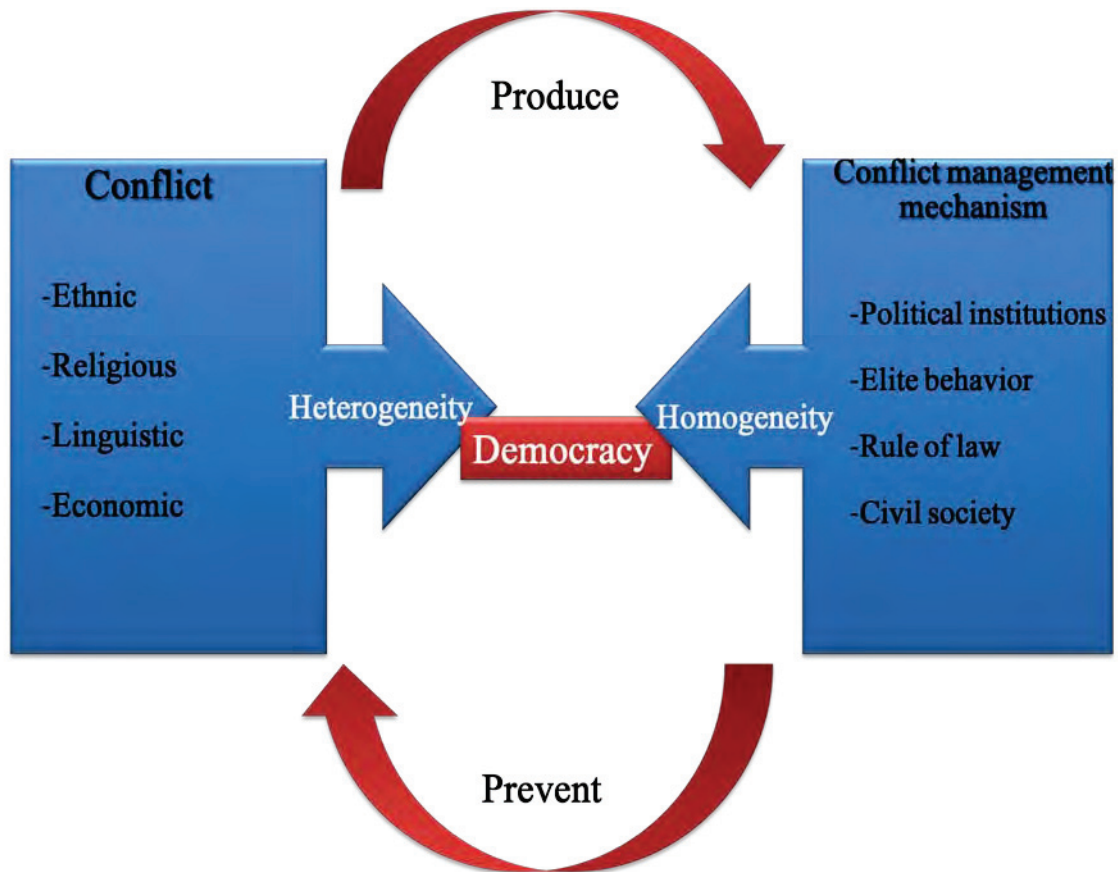
Figure 2. Feedback cycle model (bilateral conflict management system)

1. How can conflicts enhance the conflict management mechanism?

Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns.[3] Given the nature of democracy as a platform for accommodating plural interests, conflict is conceived in the very vein of democracy. Conflicts can promote the representative and deliberative aspects of democracy by serving three primary functions. First, conflicts expose underlying problems of a society. This helps the political elites to clarify issue priorities and set agendas. For example, frequent conflicts in the Niger Delta over the oil money made the leaders recognize the issue "as a priority concern of the state, a major threat to Nigeria's unity and democracy, and a huge test for the new civil administration" (Ikelegbe 2001, 463). Second, conflicts mobilize people in a grassroots level and promote civic participation in policy-making. It is not surprising that India, a country whose diversity generates frequent conflicts, has a significantly large number of Non-

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[3] University of Wisconsin-Madison. http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/aboutwhatisit htm.

Governmental Organizations (NGOs).[4] The role of active civil society leads to the third function of conflicts, a reallocation of resources. In an attempt to reconcile different groups' needs and concerns, scarce resources are redistributed among the groups.

Conflict is a signal that people give to their government that a change is needed. Whereas cooperation leads to merely maintaining the status quo or making moderate reconciliations, conflicts create a new mechanism that could prevent more severe conflicts, secession, or civil war. Conflict in multinational society is a creative force that constructs the society's built-in system for coping with diversity. A society with an active and sensitive feedback system can overcome conflicts. In a society with less sensitive feedback system, conflicts can have deadly consequences that threaten democracy. The paper discusses India as an example of the former, and Nigeria of the latter.

2. What determines the sensitivity of the conflict management system?

Which factors facilitate the translation of conflicts into a new mechanism? What precipitates the feedback cycle? This paper argues that a country's existing *mechanism* and political culture determine the sensitivity of the feedback system. These factors, endogenously evolved over a long time span, are given variables to some degree. However, this does not extinguish hopes from a country like Nigeria. Although Nigeria has poor preconditions, Nigerian leaders can increase the sensitivity of the feedback system by reforming political institutions and eliminating corruption and inefficient bureaucracy. They should use their political imagination to create a combination of political institutions that fits the country's political economy and political culture.

Ⅲ. India and Nigeria: a comparative case study

In this section, the paper probes the elements of the *mechanism* in Indian and Nigerian politics. The six elements are political parties, electoral system, federalism, legislative-executive relations, cultural autonomy, and civil society.

It should be noted that a single fixed recipe for conflict resolution does not exist. Rather, "it seems wiser to assume that appropriate institutions will vary with, among other things, the structure of cleavages and competition" (Horowitz 1985, 576). Moreover, political engineering should focus on creating the best combination of institutional arrangements for the synergy effect among

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[4] The Indian Express purports that India has the highest number of NGOs per capita in the world (Shukla, Archna. "First official estimate: An NGO for every 400 people in India." The Indian Express, July 7, 2010. http://www.indianexpress.com/news/first-official-estimate-an-ngo-for-every-400-people-in-india/643302/). However, it is not clear from the article the source of the information and what methodology was used for the study. Notwithstanding the dubious reliability of India's total number of NGOs stated in the article, a finding by *The Global Journal* attests to India's qualitatively strong NGO sector. In its annual Top 100 NGOs 2013 special issue, *The Global Journal* reports that India outpaced other developing countries and was outperformed only by the United States, United Kingdom, and Switzerland (http://theglobaljournal.net/article/view/585/) in the number of NGOs listed in the issue.

different political institutions.

1. Political parties

Arend Lijphart observes that India's party system is unique in that "cabinets are produced by the broadly representative and inclusive nature of a single, dominant party, the Congress Party" (1996, 260). "The Congress Party has been balanced in the political center and has encompassed "all the major sections and interests of society"" (Kothari 1989, 27 quoted in Lijphart 1996). Inclusive political parties accommodate diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. Coalition government thus formed is responsive to different groups' needs when conflicts erupt among these groups. Indian party system is also inclusive in the sense that it mobilizes people from different castes. People from the same caste seek to maximize their political influence through a particular party representing their caste. This is done in two ways: either "a caste group may organize a party of its own," or "political parties may select a candidate for an electoral office at the local or state level who belongs to the dominant caste," who, if elected, "may serve to advance its members' interests" (Malik et al. 2008, 125).

Unlike India, party system in Nigeria is narrow and exclusive. Nigerian political parties "have relied heavily on the manipulation of region, religion, ethnicity, ignorance, and fears of the rural and urban poor.", and "the interests articulated in the party platforms have been close to those of the urban-based, corrupt, and highly factionalized elites" (Ihonvbere 1998, 62). Political parties disproportionately represent interests of different groups. Under this political context, sensitivity of the feedback system is very low. Conflicts do not result in reforms or creation of new institutions. Instead, conflicts become a pretext for the ruling elites to suppress the opposition's voice and consolidate their power.

2. Electoral system

Power-sharing model places great emphasis on electoral system. Consociationalism attempts to design electoral system in a way that produces grand coalitions. Those following the integrative approach also believe that "electoral inducements for coalition may be one way to heighten the incentives for cooperation" (Horowitz 1985, 598). They argue that certain electoral formula could empower minority ethnic groups or motivate majority groups towards accommodative behavior.

Indian electoral system is conducive to consociational power sharing. Although consociationalism is often associated with proportional representation (PR) system, it "has managed to coexist with" the Indian plurality electoral system (Lijphart, 1996). Lijphart provides three reasons accounting for this seeming irony. First, Indian plurality system does not disfavor geographically concentrated minorities. Second, inclusive Congress Party "has been deliberately protective of the various religious and linguistic minorities" (Lijphart, 1996). Third, proportionality in cabinet

appointment has afforded minority groups a platform for exerting political influence. India's successful electoral system could also be interpreted from Horowitz's integrative perspective. Integrative power sharing favors plurality system, and India's electoral system meets the five aims that Horowitz listed in his integrative framework.[5]

Nigeria also has a single-member district plurality system, but it has worked out very differently in the Nigerian political setting. "The use of the first-past-the-post system for electing legislators from predominantly ethnically homogeneous, single-member districts in Nigeria served to reinforce parochial legislative politics, marginalize dissident sentiments and fissures within various tribal bastions" (Reynolds 2002, 418).

Institutional engineering is about a combination of political institutions, rather than establishing a single institutional form. Other political institutions influence how the electoral system functions in practice. "India's combination of numerous political parties and a first-past-the-post, single-member-constituency electoral system means that since 1967 a single party running alone often loses to a candidate supported by a multi-party alliance, and a single party by itself normally does not get a majority in the provincial legislature, which would allow it to form a single-party government" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 130). This shows a stark contrast to Nigeria whose "directly and explicitly regulated and integrated party system partially accounts for the lack of attention to electoral system design" (Reynolds 2002, 417).

3. Federalism

Both India and Nigeria are among the world's biggest federations, yet federalism takes a very different turn in each country. India's decentralized federalism is propitious for power sharing, whereas Nigeria's centralized federalism has reinforced the exclusive, elitist feature already implicit in its electoral and party system. In India, "the relationship between India's central government and its regional authorities is not a zero-sum game" (Malik et al. 2008, 129). Partial contributor to this power-sharing federal structure is India's cultural policy laid out in the Constitution. Each state administration is allowed to use its dominant language, and this "meant that a significant degree of politically legitimated linguistic and cultural nationalism had been achieved and recognized inside India's federal polity" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 122).

In contrast, Nigerian federalism has developed in a way that hampers democracy. Nigerian federalism in practice violates the very principle of federalism, merely trying "to affirm stability while

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[5] Horowitz lists five aims of an electoral system for a goal of ethnic accommodation. (Horowitz 1985, 632)
   1. Fragmenting the support of major ethnic groups
   2. Inducing majority groups to engage in interethnic bargaining
   3. Inducing multiethnic coalitions
   4. Preventing exclusion of minority groups
   5. Translating votes into seats

denying pluralism and threatening democracy and stability," "instead of reconciling social pluralism, stability, and democracy" (Ake 2005, 111). The problematic federal structure stems from Nigeria's flawed political economy. Nigeria derives over 90% of its Gross National Product (GNP) from oil (Bassey and Akpan 2012, 222). In this mono-cultural economy, the federal government is liable to enlarge its power at the cost of regional governments. This is because controlling the country's critical resource—oil—is decisive for protecting the unity of the federation. During the Second Republic, emergence of new states and local governments organized by the marginalized population, along with the federal government's resource control, "weaken the size, resource base of individual sub-federal units, augment the hegemony and visibility of the central government…provoke violent inter-communal rivalries and conflicts" (Reynolds 2002, 408). Nigerian federalism had suffered particularly under the military rule as the military junta tried to monopolize oil. Federal military government debilitated state governments by "systemic and self-serving centralization and manipulation of the revenue allocation system" (Reynolds 2002, 408). Although civilian rule was restored, the 1999 Constitution retained the centralized and contentious features of the previous Constitution. Presence of a strong central government is an inimical force to the accommodation of plural interests and conflict resolution.

4. Legislative-executive relations

While consociationalism favors parliamentary system, integrative power-sharing and power-dividing model favor presidential system. It should be noted that neither of the two systems is preferable to one another for conflict resolution. What is important is whether the legislative-executive relations is compatible with a country's general political setting.

Indian parliamentary system has gained synergy with its federalism. Parliamentary federal system is "the most supportive combination for the emergence of "centric-regional" parties" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 55).

On the other hand, Nigeria's presidential system has failed to promote democracy. This is not, however, the problem of presidential system *per se*. Horowitz notes that "if a presidential system is designed so that the electoral formula encourages moderation and penalizes ethnic exclusivism, as it was in Nigeria… the potential for presidential systems to foster accommodation seems considerable" (Horowitz 1985, 647). Although electoral system might have worked well with Nigerian presidential system, Suberu and Diamond (2002) find other reasons that presidentialism has been dysfunctional in the Nigerian setting. First, presidential system promotes monetization and corruption of politics that are already entrenched in Nigerian politics. Second, given the legacy of military government, presidential system in the Nigerian political setting could "promote personal rule and engender destructive competition" (Reynolds 2002, 412). One study mentions that presidentializing of the military government under Ibrahim Babangida, who ruled Nigeria from 1985 to 1993, "has

transformed Nigeria into a more fully patrimonial system" (Joseph 1998, 362). Third, presidential system could exacerbate ethno-regional conflicts in post-civil war societies as in Nigeria, since rival ethnic groups contend for presidency, the post of which political power is concentrated in. These explanations show that presidentialism has been pathological in the Nigerian politics. It has lowered the sensitivity of the feedback system; ruling elites are not responsive to conflicts.

5. Cultural autonomy

Cultural autonomy is explicitly the concept of consociational approach, but is relevant to integrative power-sharing and power-dividing model as well because these approaches also emphasize the recognition of distinct group identities. In the case of India and Nigeria, linguistic and religious policies vested in the Constitutions and their actual practice are key to understanding how social conflicts are translated into political institutions.

After India's independence, there were initial conflicts between regional powers and central government over language policies. Regional elites demanded recognition of regional languages, while the central government feared that this would lead to subnational movements. Eventually, Indian government reorganized state boundaries on a linguistic basis, giving each state the right to use its regional language for both administrative and educational purposes (Malik et al. 2008, 134). India's so-called "2+1 policy"—Hindi and English in addition to one local language—is a recipe for handling potential conflicts and secession rising from linguistic diversity. By recognizing each linguistic groups, Indian government gave its people "a dual identity, that of being Indian and that of belonging to their state" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 60). This dual identity held diverse groups of Indians together and minimized deadly conflicts. In contrast, Nigeria, which also has a great linguistic diversity, "is bereft of a clear-cut language policy that is capable of implementation" (Owolabi and Dada 2012, 1678).

Regarding religious policies, both India and Nigeria claim to be secular states, although actual practice has differed. Indian secularism is unique in that it "gave "equal support and equal respect" to all of India's religions" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 41), while reserving the state's right to "referee" undemocratic religious disputes. A study finds that "in part due to this formula, citizens from all religions have shown a very high degree of support for Indian democracy and trust in the Indian state" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 41). Indian secularism prevents major political parties from suppressing religious minorities. For example, when Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was heading the ruling coalition, it "did not dare" ignore the tradition of subsidizing Muslim citizens make the hajj to Mecca (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 69). Secularism in India not only prevents religious conflicts, but also has the capacity to generate new *mechanism* when conflicts erupt; ruling elites try to accommodate all religious groups' concerns, rather than allowing privilege to a major religious group.

While Nigeria embraces the same secular principle advocated by India, the deeply

entrenched opposition between Christian and Muslim communities hampers secularism in practice. Major disputes concerned the use introduction of Shari'a law in the northern Nigerian states. Secularism "was highly contested, required the accommodation of Muslim personal law, and would eventually lead to legal bifurcation of the state" (Gurharpal 2011, 19). In contrast, Indian secularism saw "the concession of Muslim Personal Law," assuaging fears of the Muslim minorities. Nigerian secularism lacked three requirements of the secular state—religious equality, religious liberty and state neutrality—that Indian secularism had (Gurharpal 2011, 13).

6. Civil society

Both consociational and integrative approaches are theories of inclusive decision-making among elites. Criticizing the power-sharing model, power-dividing model distributes political powers not only within the government, but between the government and civil society. Roeder and Rothchild argue that "The power-dividing solution begins with extensive civil rights that empower all citizens and all groups equally, but leaves to civil society rather than the state the decision concerning which groups will form to contest politics at any moment" (Roeder and Rothchild 2005, 61). Civil society is a crucial element of the *mechanism* for the following three reasons: firstly, civil society functions as a check on the elite power. Civic associations as government watchdogs hold policy-makers accountable for their actions, making politicians responsive to the concerns of various groups, including those from minorities. Second, empowering civil society prompts the public to participate in political decision-making process, thereby promoting deliberative and representative democracy. Third, healthy civil societies breed productive protests, as opposed to destructive or consumptive protests. Productive protests could prevent large-scale conflicts by inducing policymakers to take accommodative actions beforehand.

Indian democracy has prospered with a vibrant civil society. A large number of qualitatively strong NGOs in India speak to India's minority group mobilization; there is an organized community for relatively underprivileged groups to advance their own interests and exert political influence. For example, massive labor union resistance suggests that workers in India "have actively mobilized against privatization since the early 1990s," and there is "significant collaboration with consumer and environmental organizations" (Uba 2008, 862).

Nigeria's civil society offers a window of hope to its dysfunctional political context. Oil-producing Niger Delta (ND) region is a source of continuous conflicts among the central government, multinational oil companies, and the minority states in ND, who claim their share for oil production. Organized protests by civic associations have "compelled the [Nigerian government's] acknowledgement of the problems, raised their community development projects and compelled negotiation and reaching of memorandum of understanding with several communities" (Ikelegbe 2001, 462). ND agitations have also "enabled the development of an active civil society and strengthened it

as a forceful formation in relation to the state and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) … The ND conflict has become a broad, participatory, highly mobilized and coordinated platform of civil groups in a struggle for self-determination, equity, civil rights, developmental attention, state reformation and social and environmental responsibility" (Ikelegbe 2001, 462). ND conflicts organized by the civil society prove the positive functions of a conflict that this paper has previously pointed out: 1) exposing problems that influences ruling elites' political agenda setting, 2) mobilizing people from a grassroots level, and thus 3) leading to movement towards reallocation of resources.

A vibrant civil society *per se*, however, is not a sufficient condition for the conflict resolution. Only when political system is favorable and responsive to civil society can the latter successfully function as an element of the mechanism. In India, civil organizations have established close ties with the party officials, producing an efficient patronage network for promoting their interests. Examining labor union resistance in India shows the linkage between trade union membership and party affiliation. The fact that "all major political parties in India—irrespective of their ideological leanings—have their "own" trade unions" is a very unique phenomenon, because labor organizations are usually backed by left-wing parties (Uba 2008, 10). Indian political parties' general support for the labor unions is one illustration showing Indian government's responsiveness to civil society. India's active civic associations linked with political parties boost the sensitivity of the feedback system.

On the other hand, Nigerian politics has not been very responsive to civil society. "The tendency of the post-colonial state to dominate, subordinate, incorporate and suppress because of its hegemonical, personalistic, patrimonial, authoritarian and absolutist characteristics, and its prevalent abuse, lawlessness, predatoriness, ineptitude and corruption makes the state intolerant to autonomous, civil and popular actions" (Ikelegbe 2001, 440). Although the civil society in the ND has revealed the problems in the region and raised national and international awareness, "the tyrannical rule of the Abacha regime and its intense repression… caused a lull in the activities of civil society" (Ikelegbe 2001, 442). Unlike India, the relationship between civic associations and political parties is not cooperative in Nigeria. While the Indian model allows incessant communication between civil society and the government, Nigeria's unresponsive government renders the feedback system nearly impossible. This has not changed under the present civilian administration. Nigeria's civilian government "has also largely ignored the civil society resource and political demands" (Ikelegbe 2001, 461). This anti-cooperative nature of Nigerian government stems in part from the deeply entrenched culture of militarization and from its oil-dependent economy; "very high stakes of oil…constrict the state to be sluggish on the dialogue, negotiation and concessions and expansive in terms of the repressive responses" (Ikelegbe 2001, 461).

Ⅳ. India and Nigeria: political culture
So far, this paper has argued that the existing *mechanism* in a society affects the sensitivity of the

feedback system. I now turn to another factor that determines the sensitivity: political culture. Roeder and Rothchild (2005) list 'a culture of accommodation' and 'sincere commitments' as the conditions that favor the success of power-sharing institutions. "Where a trans-societal bargaining culture is present, as in … India, it facilitates the negotiation of intergroup issues," whereas in societies with a long history of severe conflicts, as in Nigeria, "ethnic groups may have less reason to trust one another and less experience with negotiation and compromise" (Roeder and Rothchild 2005, 43). The paper first examines political culture among the elite leadership, and then moves towards political culture of the general public.

The present elite-level political culture in India and Nigeria was shaped during the colonial period. Unlike other colonies, India was too vast and diverse a country to rule directly. The British had Indians to rule other Indians. The *babus* (civil servants during the colonial period) received British education, and they came to internalize democratic principles. Thus, Indian leaders at the time of the Independence were committed to democracy and respected the political institutions and rule of law. They were willing to negotiate with the oppositions. This is prominent under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership. When his colleagues in the Congress party disagreed with him on his proposed policies or programs, "Nehru did not expel the dissenters, but let intraparty forums resolve the dispute" (Varshney 1998, 42). Nehru was willing to listen and accept ideas that challenged his own, demonstrating a cooperative leadership that is propitious for conflict management system. When there was a demand for linguistic federalism, the political elites initially rejected the notion. However, Nehru and other political elites "showed political flexibility by meeting the aspirations of the leaders of linguistic groups… the government of India agreed to their demands and carried out a vast reorganization of the state boundaries" (Malik et al. 2008, 134). This example shows the resilience of Indian conflict management system. The government accepted initial conflicts as a signal for institutional reform.

The British colonial legacies in Nigeria, in contrast, were detrimental to Nigeria's democracy by bequeathing the following: "arbitrary consolidation of three major ethnic nationalities," "differential administration and modernization of the northern and southern sections," and "a three-unit federal structure that secured political autonomy and hegemony for the principal ethnicities" (Reynolds 2002, 401-02). These conflictual elements abetted fierce power struggles among the elites. Due to the undemocratic and patrimonial leadership, Nigeria's feedback system was crippled. Nigerian elites have been largely unresponsive to minority concerns projected through conflicts. Student unrest of 1988 demonstrates this case. A university unrest regarding labor policies "was met with stiff government reaction" (Agbango 2003, 64). This incident shows that conflicts were not translated into any changes in political institutions nor in normative practices. Unlike Indian leaders who were held accountable by political institutions, Nigerian leaders repeatedly transgressed "the rules of the political game in the desperate competition to win or maintain power," which "inevitably

inflame[d] the fissures inherent in a plural society, thereby jeopardizing not only democracy but also the very survival of the state" (Reynolds 2002, 412). Suberu and Diamond observes that the contemporary instability in Nigerian politics "is not presidentialism but the misdemeanors of the political class" (Reynolds 2002, 412).

Prevalent violence in political decision-making process is another problem. Nigeria has undergone a repeated cycle of military and civilian rule. Even after the Fourth Republic was established in 1999, "the use of violence to effect change of leadership has become one of the defining factors that have characterized the body polity" (Ehiabhi and Ehinmore 2011, 138). The long reign of military government had militarized Nigerian politics, producing elites who are less committed to minority interests, disregard the institutional power constraints, and abuse human rights. Thus, the feedback cycle in Nigeria does not function properly; conflicts cannot generate any *mechanism*, nor is there enough existing *mechanism* to prevent conflicts.

As much problematic as their leaders is the Nigerian people's exclusive group identification stemming from the colonial period. Nigerians were "aware that they were living in a system which bound together many ethnic groups, but at the same time did not have their commitment to their group 'eroded,' and did not 'break away' from their old setting. Rather their primordial loyalties were intensified…by their realization that their section was now in competition with others" (Vickers and Post 1973, 21). This tendency, together with the elite-level political culture, hampers multiethnic cooperation.

In contrast, India's responsible elite leadership has cultivated a political culture of trust among their constituency. India's composite score for citizen's institutional trust was the highest among the twenty-one democracies (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 73). The fact that people generally have a high trust in legal system, parliament, political parties, civil service, and police suggests that institutions are addressing interests of diverse groups in a balanced way. Particularly, Indians' high trust in the Election Committee of India strengthens the legitimacy in the electoral process (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 77) and lead to a high turn-out rate. Surprisingly, turn-out rate is higher among the more underprivileged communities. This accounts for Indians' "growing participation…a growing commitment to Indian democracy as a way of managing diversity" (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011, 80).

Ⅴ. Conclusion

As the comparison between the Indian and Nigerian politics suggests, the prevalent notion that conflict is a disruptive force to democracy is wrong. It is also wrong to say that all conflicts lead to positive outcomes. Conflicts could be better than cooperation when a society has a sensitive conflict management system. An active feedback cycle between conflicts and the *mechanism* means that the society is constantly renewing itself and advancing in a way that accommodates needs and wants of more people. The bilateral conflict management system suggests that policy makers should focus on raising the sensitivity of the feedback system, *not* eliminating conflicts.

Insights gained from the feedback cycle model could navigate conflict-ridden societies into remodeling political institutions and redrafting the Constitution. This is particularly applicable to multinational societies such as Myanmar and many countries in the Middle East as the diversity in these societies frequently ignite large-scale conflicts.

A conflict is not itself a problem; it is a society's insensitive conflict management system that is subject to blame. Under the resilient and responsive political system in which feedback cycle is active, conflicts can be conducive to democracy.

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